Youth Opportunities: The 360° Solution

Your Guide
for Preparing a Quality
Youth Opportunity Grant
Application

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"Millions of our young people are facing the risk of being left behind in a rapidly changing economy. We must help them to build brighter futures. Through our Youth Opportunity grants, we are already dramatically upgrading the skills of young people in communities all over America, from Oakland to Baltimore to rural Kentucky. With this additional investment, we can help turn around thousands of additional young lives."
        — President Bill Clinton

"These community-based initiatives recognize the significance of work by giving young people the tools to find and keep jobs. State and local leaders will work with employers and other members of the community to boost employment rates in poor areas so that we can fundamentally change the quality of life in these neighborhoods."
        — U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexis M. Herman,

Your Guide for Preparing a Quality Youth Opportunity Grant Application

Introduction

By submitting an application for a Youth Opportunity Grant, you are participating in an historic effort to significantly increase resources available for serving youth growing up in high-poverty urban and rural areas. This process is intended to solicit ideas and approaches to serving youth and communities in need, and we anticipate that there will be many more good ideas and applications than the U.S. Department of Labor will be able to fund. Therefore, we thank you for your commitment, and wish you success in preparing your application.

Purpose of this Guide

This Guide is designed for use in conjunction with the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) DFA 99-015 that was published in the Federal Register in late May 1999,[1] announcing the availability of funds to be awarded under the Youth Opportunity Grant Initiative. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to Local Workforce Investment Boards (or their equivalent administrative entities within JTPA Service Delivery Areas) and the communities that they serve that meet certain criteria.

> *The Youth Opportunity Grant Initiative is an historic effort to significantly increase resources available for serving youth growing up in high poverty urban and rural areas.*

You may also apply for a Youth Opportunity Grant if you are a Workforce Investment Act Section 166 Native American Grantee and the community that you serve meets certain criteria described in the SGA. The SGA contains all of the necessary information to complete your proposal and three forms that must be submitted with an application. This Guide is intended to help applicants prepare a good, complete application. It should only be used **with** the SGA; applicants should not regard it as a substitute for that official document.

An Overview of Youth Opportunity Grants

The Youth Opportunity Grants authorized in the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) offer a chance to make a significant attack on concentrated poverty and unemployment in this country. As a complement to the Job

Corps, School-to-Work, and formula-funded youth programs, Youth Opportunity Grants provide the Department of Labor with a means to saturate targeted high-poverty urban and rural communities with sufficient resources to cause a significant drop in youth unemployment and idleness in these communities. In turn, decreasing joblessness and idleness in high-poverty neighborhoods has the potential to help communities and taxpayers in several other ways by reducing crime, youth gangs, illegal drug use, and welfare dependency.

The Youth Opportunity Grants also offer a means at both national and local levels to build improved systems for serving youth. Planning and implementing these grants will require local areas to think geographically in targeting resources; coordinate more closely with other agencies, the public school system, and the private sector; retain dedicated staff over several years; develop high-quality programs based on best practices; and provide follow-up services to youth for a longer period than ever required by employment and training grants. The Department of Labor hopes that the systems put in place in this initiative will result in long-term improvements in our capacity to serve youth.

Part I: Youth Opportunity Grants

Purpose of Youth Opportunity Grants

The Workforce Investment Act specifies that Youth Opportunity Grants are to be used "to increase the long-term employment of youth who live in empowerment zones, enterprise communities, and high-poverty areas."

> *Youth Opportunity Grants are to be used to increase the long-term employment of youth who live in empowerment zones, enterprise comunities, and high-poverty areas.*

Increasing the long-term employment of youth in areas such as these will require a combination of efforts to help currently idle youth find jobs, return to school, enroll in vocational training or post-secondary education, or enter the military. Private sector jobs will be emphasized, with job developers and case managers helping youth find and keep employment. Grantees will also use funds for vocational training, remedial education, work experience, youth conservation and service corps, on-the-job training, college-bound efforts, integrating academic and occupational learning, and youth development activities.

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[1]The complete SGA is available on the Employment and Training Administration Home page, *http://www.doleta.gov*

The Department of Labor expects to award between 25 and 30 grants. As required under the Workforce Investment Act, grants will be distributed equitably among local boards and entities serving urban and rural areas. Grants will be awarded between $5 million and $12 million, to be used over a period of 12 months with the possibility for four additional years of funding.

In support of the Workforce Investment Act's emphasis on assessment of performance, a key part of Youth Opportunity Grants will be documenting both individual and community-wide outcomes. The Department of Labor will conduct baseline and follow-up surveys of employment, school enrollment, idleness, and teen parenthood rates in target areas so that sites can document their progress and the Department of Labor can report to Congress on the effectiveness of the initiative. The Department of Labor has conducted baseline surveys in the pilot sites, and these surveys have helped grantees better understand their target population and better plan their programs. The Department of Labor also expects to make extensive technical assistance available to grantees to improve their performance.

[**NOTE**: All applications must meet the requirements set forth in the **Solicitation for Grant Applications** (SGA) published in the Federal Register. Although this Guide is designed to help you understand the requirements of the SGA, it is not a substitute for that official document.]

Process for Evaluating and Selecting Grant Applications

Urban, rural and Indian/Native American Youth Opportunity Grant applications are evaluated on the basis of six criteria:
>   (1) Need in the target area
>   (2) Project design and service strategy
>   (3) Management and accountability
>   (4) Public sector and community resources and sustainability
>   (5) Private sector resources
>   (6) Dropout prevention plans

All complete applications will be reviewed and objectively rated by a panel according to all of the elements of the six criteria listed below (and in the published Solicitation for Grant Applications).

> *Evaluation will include a review panel, and site visits of competitive applicants.*

Site visits will be made to competitive applicants as determined by an initial panel review. The purpose of these visits is to further assess the strengths and weakness of the proposals that rate highly based only on the initial proposal review. Site visits will be conducted by a team of reviewers

appointed by the Grant Officer. In preparation for site visits, the Grant Officer's representative will inform applicants of their status as a competitive applicant, schedule a time for the visit and discuss the components of the site review and how to prepare. The site visit components will include: an introductory meeting with the executive officer of the entity that submitted the application; a brief overview presentation of the proposal; a tour of the target area and proposed site for their Youth Opportunity Center; and a round table discussion with all of the community partners described in the proposal. The site visit is expected to last no longer than one business day. Information gathered during the site visit will be reviewed and compared to the written proposal. Once this process is completed, the panel chair will submit a final panel report with recommendations to the Grant Officer. The site visits will likely take place in the fall of 1999 – sometime between mid-October to mid-November.

> *The site visits will include a round table discussion with all of an applicant's specified community partners.*

The Department of Labor will use separate review panels for urban and rural, and Native American grant applications. Panels make recommendations to the Grant Officer in the Employment and Training Administration within the Department of Labor. The Grant Officer will make final decisions on awards based on factors such as the panel's findings, the geographic distribution of the applications, other areas of interest identified in the SGA, and the availability of funds.

Evaluation Criteria:

The SGA includes specific criteria for the evaluation of competitive grant proposals, with a certain maximum number of points assigned to each criterion. Every application will be reviewed against the same evaluation criteria. Prior to submitting your proposal, you should review the criteria and evaluate how well your proposal addresses each of the six, which are listed in the published SGA and are outlined below:

1. Need in the Target Area [up to 10 bonus points added to overall score]
   ✓ the concentration of poverty, school dropouts and the lack of employment opportunities in the project service area
   ✓ the extent of gaps in the capacity of the local infrastructure to effectively address the employment and educational barriers which characterize the targeted population

> *Up to 10 bonus points may be awarded based upon the relative need in the target area.*

2. Project Design and Service Strategy [40 points]
   ✓ the extent to which the project incorporates new and

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better strategies for increasing the long-term employment of all youth, particularly those out of school, including youth with disabilities, who live in the target area

✓ the extent to which the project assists them in acquiring the necessary academic, technical, and workplace skills and work experience to successfully transition into adulthood, careers, and further education and training

3. Management and Accountability [20 points]
   ✓ the manner in which the project will be managed to ensure that quality services and positive outcomes are achieved for youth within the community
   ✓ the extent to which the project will be accountable
to the community through an advisory board and youth council for issues such as expected levels of performance and community participation

> *40 of 100 total points will be awarded based on the project design and service strategy.*

4. Sustainability and Public Sector and Community Resources [15 points]
   ✓ the extent to which the applicant commits cash resources to sustain the project during years of declining federal funding
   ✓ the extent to which the applicant assure continuity of the core staff
   ✓ how the project will leverage other resources and initiatives available in the community to support youth development and sustainment of the project both during and beyond the life of Federal funding

5. Private Sector Resources [15 points]
   ✓ the effectiveness of strategies for involving the private sector in providing jobs and work-based learning slots and other necessary project resources

6. **Dropout Prevention Plans** [10 points]
   ✓ the extent to which there is a plan for reducing the school dropout rate
   ✓ the extent to which there is a plan for increasing the college enrollment of youth in the target area

Who is Eligible to Apply for a Youth Opportunity Grant?

You are an eligible applicant for these grants if you are a Local Workforce Investment Board [or, in States that have not yet made the transition to Workforce Investment Boards, the administrative entity that receives formula funds for a local service delivery area (SDA) under the Job Training Partnership Act] serving a community that meets one of the following three criteria:

(1) the community has been designated a Federal Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) by the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Department of Agriculture under section 1391 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

(2) if the State has no federally designated EZ/EC, the community has been designated by the Governor as a high poverty area; or

> *Applications may come from Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, Governor-designated high poverty areas, or Native American communities.*

(3) if the State has one or more EZs or ECs, the community is one of two additional areas in the state that the Governor has designated as eligible to apply for funds under this grant program. Such communities must meet poverty criteria for EZ/ECs set forth in section 1392 (a)(4), (b), and (d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. **You must include a letter in your grant application package signed by the Governor to certify this designation.**

You may also apply for a Youth Opportunity Grant if you are a Workforce Investment Act Section 166 Native American Grantee and the community that you serve meets certain criteria. Please see Part V of the SGA, which deals specifically with Native American applications.

State involvement in all of these projects is encouraged. States must be given an information copy of all urban and rural proposals when they are submitted to the Department of Labor.

Who is Eligible to be Served Under the Youth Opportunity Grants?

These grants can serve all youth who live in the target community who are not less than age 14 and not more than age 21 at the time of enrollment.

> *Grants can serve 14 to 21 year-olds who are in or out-of-school, but should take care not to offer incentive for in-school youth to drop-out.*

While projects should address the needs of both in-school and out-of-school youth, we expect that the largest share of funds from these grants will go towards serving out-of-school youth. Care should be taken not to give incentives for in-school youth to drop out of high school to participate in any programs offered here.

What Activities are Allowable
Under the Youth Opportunity Grant?

The allowable uses of grant funds are described in the activities authorized at Section 129 of the Workforce Investment Act and at 20 CFR 664.400 through 664.620 of the WIA regulations, including intensive placement services and follow-up services. These program activities can be grouped around four broad themes:

> *Allowable activities include improvements in educational achievement, preparation for and success in employment, supports for youth, and services to help youth develop as citizens and leaders.*

✓ improving educational achievement (including such elements as tutoring, study skills training, instruction leading to a high school diploma, alternative school and dropout prevention strategies);

✓ preparation for and success in employment (including summer jobs, paid and unpaid work experience, and occupational skills training);

✓ supports for youth (including meeting supportive service needs, providing mentoring, and intensive follow-up activities); and

✓ services intended to develop the potential of youth as citizens and leaders, and that promote their development through activities (accessible to all youth) that include sports, recreation and other age appropriate activities.

In order to provide program participants with a caring adult, intimately familiar with their personal history, career goals, and educational and social needs, youth are to be linked with a case manager and job developer. Case managers will have primary responsibility for providing clients with aid, assistance and referrals to activities, services and job placements.

Part II: Application Requirements

Submission Requirements

The following are the requirements for submitting an application for a Youth Opportunity Grant:

✓ Submit four copies of your application, one with an original signature.

✓ Applications must be single-spaced in (at least) 12-point type on single-sided, numbered pages.

✓ The project narrative should not exceed 30 pages; 10 additional pages of attachments may be included.

✓ Applications must be received by *4 p.m. eastern time on September 20, 1999* [**see SGA for details**]. No proposals or additional information will be accepted after this date.

✓ Applications are to be stapled or bound with a single clip; please do not submit applications in three-ring (or more) binders or folders.

Requirements for Section I: Project Summary

The Project Summary is the basic information that must be submitted with all Youth Opportunity Grant applications. You must complete all elements of this section or your application will be disqualified and will not be considered in the Youth Opportunity Grant competition. Though this section is mandatory, it is not the primary basis upon which applications will be evaluated. You should view it as a prerequisite to advancing to the competition. The Project Narrative in Section II is the description of the project that the review panel will focus on in evaluating the proposals. Section II is where you fully describe the innovative and creative approach that you propose to bring to the delivery of services in your community.

Be sure your Project Summary includes:

Page 1   The Application Cover Sheet can be found in Appendix B of the SGA. The cover sheet designates the applicant's name and affiliation.

Page 2   Application for Federal Assistance, SF424; be certain that this form is signed.

Page 3   Project Synopsis, ETA Form 9070.

Pages 4-5   Executive Summary (limit: two pages) In your two-page executive summary, describe the points addressed on the Project Synopsis Form. Also include in this section the letter from the Governor designating your area as eligible for award if you are not an EZ/EC.

Pages 6-7   Budget Information Sheet and Budget Justification, providing narrative description and additional detail regarding the budget information.

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The Project Summary is required material and is not included in the application page limits. A completed Section I of your proposal is your *passkey* into the proposal review process. It has little to do with whether or not your proposal is chosen – unless it is incomplete or contains incorrect information, **in which case you are immediately disqualified from the competition.**

> *The Project Summary is very important required material, but it does not count against an application's page limit.*

Requirements for Section II:
Project Narrative/Statement of Work

Section II, however, is the *meat* of your proposal. In Section II you have an opportunity to tell the review panel exactly why your proposal should be selected for funding. In this section, you will explain the innovative aspects of your proposed project, your capability to partner with selected organizations to implement your plan, and your project's expected outcomes and your capacity to achieve those outcomes. The narrative should be concise, but contain enough detail to ensure that the readers understand your project activities and how you plan to accomplish your project goals. As you respond to each segment of Section II, keep in mind the evaluation criteria (pages 6-7) that serve as a guide for the review panel.

> *The Project Narrative is where you fully describe your proposal, drawing attention to the innovative and compelling elements of your design.*

How Proposals will be Reviewed

While the SGA provides a thorough discussion of the evaluation criteria, the project requirements, and gives numerous examples and ideas related to each criteria, the following information will provide you with additional insights into what the panelists will be looking for when they review your proposal.

> **NOTE**: All applications must meet the requirements set forth in the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) published in the Federal Register. Although this Guide is designed to help you understand the requirements of the SGA, it is not a substitute for that official document.

1. Description of Service Area

Panelists will want to see that you carefully described the target area that your proposed project is intended to serve. Your description should include information pertaining to:
- ✓ The target area's geographical limits;
- ✓ The poverty and unemployment statistics for the population; and
- ✓ The specific reasons why there are a large number of dropouts and out-of-school youth who are unemployed.

For rural applicants, the statistical data you should use is contained in the Census Bureau's <u>County and City Data Book</u> which is available at your local public library. Information specific to an urban neighborhood or census

tract or block can also be purchased from the Census Bureau through their Internet site: *http://www.census.gov/main/www.subjects.html.* Information should be based on the 1990 Census. If circumstances have changed markedly in the target community since the 1990 Census, describe such changes and provide any additional information on the community.

The dropout rate of the target area high schools should be calculated by showing the 9th grade enrollment at each high school in 1994 and the graduating class in June of 1998.

In terms of providing a map of the target area, the planning department of your local government entity should be able to provide you with current local area maps that include key features that distinguish the census tracts to be served. There is also computer software available that can be used for this purpose.

2. Project Design and Service Strategy

In this section panelists will be looking for the "what" of your proposal narrative. You should describe the services that you propose to provide in your project. You should explain how youth will be served within the targeted area consistent with the framework required under the Workforce Investment Act.

> *In preparing your project design, ask yourself, "what will be different for youth in our targeted area based on our receiving a Youth Opportunity Grant?"*

While the SGA identifies each of the required program design features, it is your job not only to assure that they will be present, but more importantly, to describe what unique strategies or "outside the box" approaches that have shown promise, you plan to implement. This is where you will be most rewarded for your unique approach to implementing the program model. The three case studies contained in the SGA provide a perfect opportunity for you to demonstrate your unique, seamless and caring approach to implementing the project's model.

In preparing this section, ask yourself, "what will be different for youth in our targeted area based on our receiving a Youth Opportunity Grant?" Panelists will be looking for answers to this question.

3. Management and Accountability

In this section panelists will be looking at your organization's ability to manage – both financially and administratively – a large grant. You should describe and document your ability to administer a grant. Include in your

Youth Program Design Features
under the Workforce Investment Act

The framework for serving youth under the Workforce Investment Act and in this project must be consistent. Think of the framework for serving youth in terms of five program design features. The youth program must provide for:

- individual needs assessments;

- individual service strategies;

- preparation for postsecondary education and/or employment, linkages between academic and occupational learning, connections to intermediaries;

- a menu of program elements; and

- access to information and referrals.

The ten required program elements listed in WIA sec. 129(c)(2) and the regulations in sec. 664.410 are:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention;
- Alternative school offerings;
- Summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing;
- Occupational skills training;
- Leadership development opportunities, which may include such activities as positive social behavior and soft skills, decision making, team work, and other activities;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring;
- Follow-up services (under this project, follow-up services for each client are required to be for at least 24 months); and
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling and other counseling referrals.

Additionally, the program design must provide intensive employment and educational placement services for clients.

discussion information regarding the experience that both you and your partners bring to the table. Also include a chart identifying the organizations with which you are partnering and all staff who hold key management responsibilities. Describe the specific responsibilities of each organization and relevant staff members as they relate to the grant.

> *Include your experience at managing a large grant and also in providing employment and support services to youth.*

Describe the manner in which partnering agencies' staff members will work together and how they will assume responsibility for work associated with the project as Federal funding decreases.

Our experience shows that the project coordinator is integral to the overall success of these types of projects. You should be able to assure the panelists that you have an effective method for hiring and training the project coordinator.

You should be specific in describing your experience, and that of your partners, in providing employment and support services for young people with significant employment and educational barriers. Include a description of projects or grants which you or your partners have operated and/or administered. Compare the characteristics of previous program participants to the target group for this project and describe the outcomes of those programs.

4. Sustainability and Public Sector and Community Resources

In this section panelist will be looking for how the services offered by your proposed project will become a permanent, ongoing service option in your community after Federal funding runs out, as well as who will come on board to support the long-term viability of the project. This information is particularly important since local sustainability will be required through a cash match during grant years three through five when Federal funding declines to 75, 75, and 50 percent, respectively, of the original grant amount.

> *Describe how your project will become a permanent, ongoing service option in your community after Federal funding runs out.*

You should identify specific resources (e.g., financial; staff; services; equipment; etc.) as well as organizational capabilities that are being contributed by other organizations in order to provide a full range of services to the target population.

At a minimum, you should describe your coordination efforts with the following organizations and the contributions each will make to the project:

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- Local school district;
- Local service providers;
- Local housing authorities;
- Local law enforcement; and
- Local EZ/EC entity

Developing a network is an ongoing activity – developing community partnerships does not end when you submit your application. Describe how you will continue to cultivate and expand your network. A broad network of organizations allows you to more effectively serve your participants and helps to ensure that the project will be sustained after Federal funds run out.

A major portion of the site visit to competitive applicants will be a meeting with the proposed community partners. This will help us to assess which partnerships are coordinated, provide a needed service to the proposed project, and reflect a commitment to long-term sustainability. Our experience shows that during site visits, it is usually very clear which partnerships are meaningful and involved in the design of the proposal. Without coordination among the many organizations in your community that provide services to your target population, your program will end when the funding runs out. The Department of Labor wants to ensure that this does not happen.

> *A broad network of organizations allows you to more effectively serve your participants and helps to ensure that the project will be sustained after Federal funds run out.*

5. Private Sector Resources

Employers are critical to the success of placing youth in unsubsidized jobs. Take care to describe how you plan to obtain employer support and what role employers will play in your project.

In this section describe the approaches you will use for developing relationships with employers. This is an important aspect of your proposal because you will need to generate enough appropriate unsubsidized jobs for your participants. In addition to the role of the core staff job developers, include a description of how you will encourage the use of intermediaries to bridge the gap between youth and employers to customize jobs to meet work-related needs of the participants placed with them.

> *Employers are critical to the success of placing youth in unsubsidized jobs.*

You may also want to describe specific commitments to provide specific jobs (e.g., Firm A and Firm B have each committed to hiring 85 people). Also include employer commitments to provide post-hire training and/or supports, such as transportation.

We fully understand that rural and Native American sites will not have as much access to private sector jobs and partnerships as urban sites, and that some extremely poor rural areas may have few if any private sector partners with which to work. Rural Native American sites can still get full credit under this question if they make the best use of private sector resources available.

6. Dropout Prevention Plans

In this section panelists will be looking for a complimentary strategy to increasing the employment rate among the targeted age group; namely, keeping kids in school, recapturing those that have dropped out, and providing access to postsecondary education opportunities including four-year colleges.

You should keep in mind – as indicated in the SGA – given the age restrictions on this grant, new dropout prevention efforts in elementary and middle schools must be paid for with other sources of funds. Therefore, your answer to this question should include both efforts paid for through this grant and new complementary efforts that are proposed. Your answer should clearly distinguish between what is being paid for by the grant and what will be provided through other resources.

Part III: Suggested Month-by-Month Proposal Development Activities

Strategically use the next four months to bring together all of the complex elements and pieces of your project.

In order to provide applicants with ample time to develop and submit quality proposals, the Department of Labor has allocated almost four months for proposal development. Given the complex nature of the Youth Opportunity Grant's design and the high degree of integration and coordination required between community resources, it is advisable that you strategically use this time and start early in bringing together the many pieces of this project. In order to accomplish this formidable task, as a helpful guide, we suggest the following month-by-month schedule of activities:

NOTE: The development model is a suggestion. Employing your own development model will not detract from your application.

Month 1

Identify lead organization. This is the organization that will be responsible for submitting the final proposal. In many cases, the lead organization may also be the same entity responsible for the project's implementation.

Create Steering Committee. The responsibility of this committee is to provide policy guidance and oversight throughout the proposal development process. If your local area already has a workforce investment board or youth council, you may elect to use its members or a sub-group.

Define your local landscape. Begin with a process that sets out to identify four elements that should be considered. Briefly discuss each of them:

- Youth Population: An in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of the youth population will be helpful in determining the types of services that will be needed in the target community. Information such as dropout rates, numbers of at-risk youth in the schools, age and size of out-of-school youth population, and other characteristics locally determined to be of importance will greatly assist developers of proposals in selecting the training and other services that will be needed to adequately serve the target population.

- Current and Projected Labor Market: The basis for the selection of service providers should result from a sound analysis of the current and projected job market. Youth councils or Private Industry Councils can acquire some of the desired information from business people on the board and in the community, State and local economic development agencies (such as the State Job Training Coordinating Council), and local legislative officials. Information acquired from local sources will likely be current and will provide a true picture of your project area.

- Services Available in the Local Area: An inventory of resources for youth will be helpful in identifying what is already available and where there are service gaps which need to be addressed. This process, sometimes referred to as resource mapping, should identify both public and private sector organizations that work with youth. Activities and services available through vocational education, adult education, vocational rehabilitation, Job Corps, school-to-work, local law enforcement, community-based organizations, and other youth-related entities (beyond government programs) can help you offer a broad array of options for the target population.

> *Resource mapping may serve to identify gaps in present youth services.*

- Successful Providers in the Community: Your proposal should identify and assess successful providers in the community that will comprise the menu of services available to clients. Some of these services will be paid for directly with grant funds, while other services may be leveraged in order to supplement those services paid for directly by grant

dollars. Getting these partners on board and developing memoranda of understanding will require careful negotiations and inclusion with proposal development.

Conduct an Initial Community-Wide Meeting. This will give the community an opportunity to get involved in the proposal development process early on and encourage future community involvement and support for the project. This meeting should be an open forum at which community leaders, youth serving organizations, faith-based organizations, representatives from the EZ/EC initiative, parents and youth have an opportunity to discuss and suggest how the needs of their community's youth could be met by the project. Information gleaned from this meeting will be very useful as you begin to draft your proposal. In order to extract the most relevant information in a way that is all-inclusive and engaging, you should give thoughtful consideration to how this meeting will be facilitated. Some of the current demonstration sites used a professional facilitator during this meeting.

Hold Youth Focus Groups. In order to get a true picture of what youth think they need and how best they would like to be served by your project, it is a good idea to try to bring a number of youth from the community together in small groups and lead them through a discussion that would elicit responses to these types of questions. However, keep in mind that such focus group participants should reflect the diversity of the youth population in your targeted area.

> *Use Community Meetings and Youth Focus Groups to gather information for developing an initial proposal of the services you will seek to provide.*

Write Initial Draft Proposal. Based on the all the information you collect over the first month, you should be able to develop an initial draft of your project's design and approach to the model contained in the SGA. At this point you may not yet know exactly which service providers you will want to partner with, but you should know what services you want to include based upon all of your early research.

Month 2

Determine Partners. At this point you should be ready to begin looking within the community for partners that would be best suited to provide the services you have determined will be needed. Your initial contact should be informational in nature and without any promises. In addition, you will need to be looking for partners who may be able to provide additional resources to the project either as an in-kind or cash match.

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Coordinate Services. Just like a puzzle, each piece of the proposal needs to fit together in a way that provides services as seamlessly as possible and without duplication. This should be accomplished by bringing all of your prospective partners together for a series of meetings and mapping out all of the details, making sure that every service that needs to be present in your proposal is accounted for.

Draft MOUs. The memoranda of understanding will require that you and your partners commit in writing exactly what is expected from your relationship during and even after the project's life. Be realistic and as specific as possible. For instance, if you expect your partner to serve or place a specific number of youth, you should include the number. This will help to avoid any confusion later on.

> *Bring all of your prospective partners together to map out all of the details, making sure that every service that needs to be present in your proposal is accounted for.*

Month 3

Complete second Draft. At this point you should be ready to complete a second draft which includes a well-designed program and all of the necessary community partners you expect to come on board if you receive an award.

Submit for Comments. Once your second draft is completed, you should send it out for extensive comment. While you are not required to submit your application to the State, it is highly recommended. This will give the State an opportunity to offer additional resources which will be extremely important, given the fact that grant funds will decline in the third through fifth year of the project. It will also help to ensure that there is coordination between the State's five-year workforce development plan and your project. Additionally, you should submit the second draft for comments to partner organizations and the steering committee.

Month 4

> *Solicit and use feedback to strengthen your proposal.*

Review Comments. Since you have provided ample opportunities for comments to a variety of entities, it will take some time and thought to work through the suggestions and decide which ones will strengthen your proposal.

Complete Final Draft. Based on all of the comments and any last minute changes in program strategy, you should be ready to pull it all together and complete a final draft. In addition, you should develop a presentation that you can use to clearly and concisely explain what is contained in your proposal. This may be useful for seeking additional resources from foundations or other agencies.

Hold Final Community-Wide Meeting. Again, in order to ensure community buy-in and provide them with an opportunity to see what you consider to be very close to your final plan, a second open community forum should be held. The presentation you developed could be used to showcase the proposal. Let the community know that while this is the last opportunity they will have to comment on the plan, if you get the award they will be a very important part of implementing and sustaining the project. Clearly, you need to make sure that there is a real role for community members and it's not just rhetoric.

> *Conduct a final community forum to secure buy-in to your fully developed plan.*

Finalize and Submit Proposal. If there were any last minute changes, include them and make sure that all of the pieces of your proposal are in place. Once you are certain that they are, submit your final proposal to the Department of Labor.

As a final note, keep in mind that review panelists, while conducting site visits as a part of this competition, will want to know the steps and process used for collaboration and for reaching community consensus on the implementation plan presented in your application.

Ways to Strengthen Your Proposal

- Fully address all six evaluation criteria – points are based only on the six criteria.
- Start early – developing a project plan and writing a proposal can be *extremely* time consuming.
- Make sure your service strategy supports your proposed outcomes.
- Demonstrate familiarity with your existing local programs and partner organizations.
- Build a strong relationship with the local agencies.
- Demonstrate that your partners are "on board" – don't propose to *establish* partnerships.
- Be succinct – don't use thirty pages if you don't need them!
- Don't bury important information – make it easy for the reviewers to find information.
- Test your proposal on outside readers.
- Check *one more time* to be sure that you have addressed all of the requirements of the SGA.
- Provide **strategies** where they are asked for; resist the urge to merely re-word the language of the SGA to address an activity not yet planned.

Other Resources

The SGA contains numerous references to other programs and activities. This section provides you with a complete listing of these references as well as some others.

Organization	Telephone #	Internet Site
Alice Lloyd College	606-368-2101	www.college.com/details/college/1/97/d4_1017.asp
American Summer Bridge program	505-277-6930	
Baltimore Futures Program	410-396-1910	
Berea College	606-986-9341	www.berea.edu
California Conservation Corps	916-386-8394	www.ccc.ca.gov/frame.htm
Center For Employment Training (CET)	408-294-7849	www.best.com/~cfet/main.htm
CollegeBound Foundation of Baltimore	410-783-2905	
Communities in Schools program	703-519-8999	www.cis.org
Detroit Chamber of Commerce	313-596-0478	
Huntington Learning Centers	201-261-8400	www.tutoringhlc.com
National Association of Service and Conservation Corps	202-737-6272	www.nascc.org
National Job Corps Office	800-733-5627	www.jobcorps.org/
National School to Work Office	800-251-7236	www.stw.ed.gov/
Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC) of America	215-236-4500	www.oica.com/ndex2.htm
Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet)	202-659-1064	www.nyec.org
Rheedlen Foundation	212-666-4163	www.pbs.org/jobs/rheedlen.html
Score! Educational Services	949-363-6764	www.score-ed.com
Strive/East Harlem Employment Services, Inc.	212-360-1100	www.strivecentral.com
Sylvan Learning Centers	800-338-2283	www.educate.com/home.htm
United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. (UNITY)	405-236-2800	www.unityinc.org
YouthBuild	617-623-9900	www.youthbuild.org
Youth Opportunity Movement (US Department of Labor)	202-219-6236	www.yomovement.org

What to do if You Have Questions

General questions about the **competition process and the SGA** (when the application is due; etc.) should be directed to the USDOL Grants Office. The contact person assigned to the youth opportunity grants is Yvonne Harrell; her telephone number is (202) 219-7300, x 139. Questions of a **technical nature** should be *faxed* to the National Grants Office at (202) 219-8739. Also, the questions and answers from the five technical assistance conferences will be posted on the Internet at http://www.doleta.gov.

Final Checklist

✓ Have you completed and signed your SF424 (Application for Federal Assistance)?

✓ Have you completed your Project Synopsis form, and included the two page executive summary and the letter from the Governor designating your area as eligible for award if you are not an EZ/EC?

✓ Have you completed your Budget Information Sheet and your budget narrative/ justification?

✓ Are all items on the forms complete and forms signed where necessary?

✓ Is the proposal arranged in the order that is specified? Have you provided a table of contents? Are page numbers included for all relevant areas on the project synopsis form?

✓ Does your proposal address all of the selection criteria?

✓ Are all parts of the application included, identified and easily located?

✓ Have you enclosed a signed original and three copies of your completed application?

✓ Are you ensuring that your application package will be received by the deadline?

✓ Be sure to mail or hand-deliver your application by the deadline to:

> U.S. Department of Labor,
> Employment and Training Administration,
> Division of Federal Assistance,
> Attn: Ms. Yvonne Harrell, SGA/DFA 99-015
> 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room S4203

YO!

The Youth Opportunity
Movement

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
ALEXIS M. HERMAN, SECRETARY

Your Guide for Preparing a Quality
Youth Opportunity Grant Application
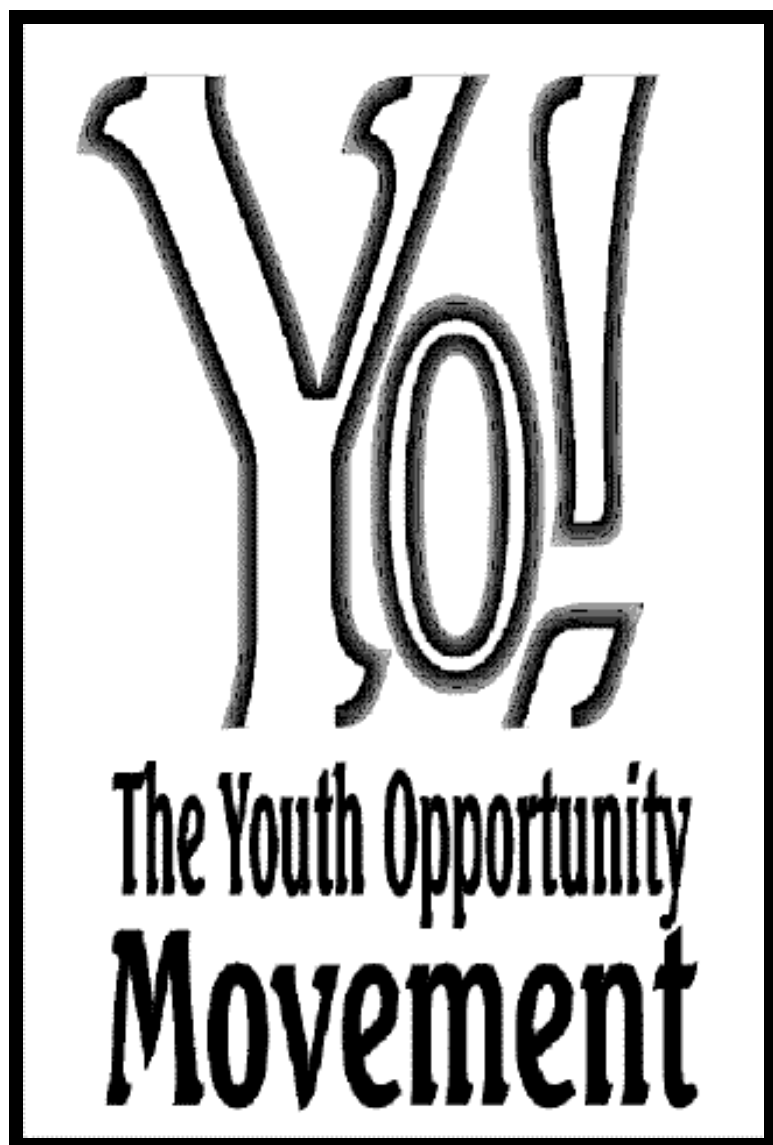
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